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“THIS CROWN CAME DOWN TO US  
FROM HEAVEN, GOD SENT IT TO YOU  
THROUGH US”

NEOLOG JEWISH DISCOURSE TRADITIONS  
ON THE CORONATION OF CHARLES IV

*“we Hungarian Jews feel with undying gratitude and proud self-assurance that this blessed land and the glorious ancient throne of our new king have brought for us the fruits of the harvest of the prophet Samuel: our rights and justice with our inclusion in the fraternal alliance of the great nation”*

Kiss, Arnold: “Színarany koronát tettél a fejére...” [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...] *Egyenlőség* 6 January 1917. 4.

**Abstract:** The last coronation in the Kingdom of Hungary took place in the social reality of the Great War. The event was documented with modern means, it was interpreted by numerous opinion-setting groups through the press and also recorded in works of art and easily reproduced popular souvenir objects. The life-worlds of the Monarchy experienced on a denominational basis fundamentally determined the experiences, possibilities for action, interpretations, discourse tradition and perspectives of their members. The study examines how the Jewish confession in Hungary adapted and interpreted a rite symbolizing statehood that was performed within the frames of the Roman Catholic confession, as part of the coronation mass. Although veneration of the crowned ruler had been present in Judaism, the succession to the throne in 1916 created a new situation for the Jews who had been raised to the rank of recognised denomination under the previous ruler and who had become equal subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary. The Neolog rabbis presented the events of their time through religious tradition and

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community memory. Charles IV – like the deceased Francis Joseph – acquired the image of biblical kings, that conveyed the hopes the denomination placed in him as subjects, as well as the role that had been played by Francis Joseph. The figure of Charles IV represented a span of historical development in which the Jews acquired civil rights and became part of the nation.

**Keywords:** Habsburg, Jew, civil religion, state patriotisms, veneration of the king

The last coronation in the Kingdom of Hungary took place in the social reality of the Great War. The event was documented with modern means, it was interpreted by numerous opinion-setting groups through the press and also recorded in works of art and easily reproduced popular souvenir objects. Parallel with the anniversaries of great national figures we find in the shaping of national feast culture in Hungary celebration of the coronation, the birthday and anniversaries of the ruler, and the commemoration of major events linked to members of the ruling house. They were held within denominational frames, in religious services.<sup>1</sup> The collective rites of symbolic politics were carried out along the lines of the division of contemporary society into denominations and associations. In religious texts of the Jewish and other denominations the ruler represented the prevailing order of society and the structure of society at the given time unfolded around him. The Habsburg Monarchy, that in comparison to other empires was often mentioned as a “Catholic great power”,<sup>2</sup> had become by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, besides a dynastic community, a manifold system of economic, social and cultural ties. The Neolog Jewish weekly paper *Egyenlőség* published in Budapest also attributed the peace among the peoples and denominations of the Monarchy to the dynasty, presenting it as an institution above nations and religions that alone bore responsibility for preserving the unity of the Empire.<sup>3</sup> The role of patron extended to the dynasty was also reflected in Orthodox news items.<sup>4</sup> Pre-figurations of this topos can be sought in publications marking anniversaries of the ruler and under the patronage of members of the ruling family, as well as the texts of prayers said for the well-being of the ruler and the state, and in religious explications regarding loyalty to the authorities.<sup>5</sup>

The life-worlds of the Monarchy experienced on a denominational basis fundamentally determined the experiences, possibilities for action, interpretations, discourse tradition and perspectives of their members.<sup>6</sup> In the case of a coronation being held in the hinterland of a war – where the self-image of feudal Hungary

1 BARNA 2016.

2 KLIEBER 2010. 218–219.

3 GLÄSSER 2016.

4 *Zsidó Híradó*, 27 October 1898 / 9. Hírek – Albrecht főherceg és a szentesi rabbi [News – Archduke Albrecht and the rabbi of Szentes]; *Zsidó Híradó*, 3 February 1889 / 9. Hírek – Felekezeti béke [News – Denominational peace].

5 UNOWSKY 2006; DAMOHORSKÁ 2010.

6 KLIEBER 2010.

and the demand of modern society for representation appeared together<sup>7</sup> – it can be said that the distinctive life-world of the Jewish denominational interpretations could also be identified. Veneration of the crowned ruler had its roots in the religious traditions of Judaism, while the interpretations of the coronation also indicated that the new Jewish institutional system was being created at the same time as the frames of the modern civil state. Writing in the Neolog Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség*, Arnold Kiss, a Jewish poet and Neolog rabbi in Buda, following the Jewish concept of time that sought fundamental similarities of events, drew a parallel between the figure of Charles IV and the coronation itself, and Biblical times. This was also generally true for the coronation homilies of Neolog rabbis and publicistic writings in the Jewish press.

The study examines how the Jewish confession in Hungary adapted and interpreted a rite symbolizing statehood that was performed within the frames of the Roman Catholic confession, as part of the coronation mass. What was the response within the synagogues to loyalty and homage manifested within confessional frames? And what place did this have within the historical order of the Neolog community? How did they represent the topos of progress and the betterment of society with regard to their own situation? How did the coronation become a celebration of equal rights and belonging to the nation?

## **The search of Jewry for its place in the process of succession to the throne**

Mourning for Francis Joseph and the coronation of the new emperor as king of Hungary were intertwined both at the level of the hinterland of the country at war and in the interpretations of the Jewish denomination. Ferenc Maczó points out that at the time of the death of Francis Joseph in the eyes of his subjects the emperor-king became one with the state, one with the faith placed in permanence. Under his reign generation followed generation without experiencing change. He became the symbol of continuity from the past and an era of prosperity.<sup>8</sup> The image formed of Francis Joseph in the different strata of society was largely shaped by people's experience of history, the life-world in which the members of different denominations lived.<sup>9</sup> Although veneration of the crowned ruler had been present in Judaism, the succession to the throne in 1916 created a new situation for the Jews who had been raised to the rank of recognised denomination under the previous ruler and who had become equal subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary. At the same time Jewish denominational news items on the coronation also attempted to present the expected impact the coronation of the new ruler

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<sup>7</sup> KERTÉSZ 1917.

<sup>8</sup> MACZÓ 2016b. 5.

<sup>9</sup> LANDGRAF 2016; GERŐ 2016.

would have on the future of the Jews. If we regard the wider social frame of the news items, we find that they were written in the capital city in mourning. As Ferenc Maczó also notes, news of the emperor's death spread quickly, already at 11 p.m. on 21<sup>st</sup> November music and entertainments were halted in coffee-houses and other amusement places in Budapest.

However some people learnt the news only the following morning. Mourning banners were put out in the streets, images of the ruler appeared in black mourning frames and the crowds wore black mourning bands.<sup>10</sup> Four days later the Neolog Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* announced in a mourning frame the death of the ruler and gave a historical overview of his long reign, judging it to have been a blessing for the Jews of Hungary.<sup>11</sup> Because of the social changes that had occurred in the lives of Jews, Francis Joseph was compared even in his lifetime to Moses, and this became a recurrent topos in the speeches of rabbis in connection with the death and succession, showing parallels to the liberation from Egyptian bonds.<sup>12</sup>

"We stand there at the bier of Francis Joseph I. We were an oppressed and persecuted people when he ascended to the throne; today we mourn him as the free citizens of a free nation. Our freedom was born during his reign. His blessed hand ordered our rights. The hand of the king that opened the doors of our centuries of oppression, that took us out into freedom, was like the hand of a father leading his tired child. There is mourning for the dead, laments for a father in every house of Israel in Hungary. He was like the majestic figures of our Bible. He was Moses in his wisdom, love and sobriety. He was Moses in his death too. The great old man died on the last mountain, on the threshold of the future. Grant Oh Lord, God of all kings, that his Joshua may lead us to the promised land of peace and development. We place our trust in you, Joshua of millions, our new ruler! You were able to spend your youth at the side of the Master. He placed his hand on you, anointed you. There is deep mourning without end among us. We, abandoned children, are crying on the wilderness. Come, Joshua and lead us with your triumphant youth!"<sup>13</sup>

The editor-in-chief of *Egyenlőség*, Lajos Szabolcsi, who followed his father in that post, used comparisons to Moses and Joshua in writing on the connection between Francis Joseph and the heir to the throne Karl Franz Joseph. Just as Moses could not enter Canaan after the years of wandering in the wilderness, so

<sup>10</sup> Maczó 2016b. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Egyenlőség* 25 November 1916. 5–7. I. Ferenc József tettei és nyilatkozatai a zsidóság ügyeiben. [Actions and declarations of Francis Joseph I on Jewish causes.]; See: LOHRMANN 2000. 212–213, 216.

<sup>12</sup> The background for this comparison was that in the 1867/68 legislative period following the Compromise, together with other major issues, the question of Jewish legal status was also regulated (in Act 17 of 1867).

<sup>13</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 1 November 1916, 1. Szabolcsi, Lajos: Meghalt a király [The king is dead].

Francis Joseph could not see the new world. After their long journey full of trials but with the promise of victory, his people(s) were being led on the road to peace by Charles, the heir to the throne who had grown up beside him and represented the new generation, like Joshua.

The image formed of Francis Joseph in the Judaized loyal state-patriotic discourse followed the time concept of Jewish liturgy and homilies and sought parallels in which the foundational memory in the Assmannian sense could be referred to the present, so that in the writings of contemporaries and in commemorative speeches Francis Joseph assumed the figure of the biblical king.

The crowned ruler was a pale reflection in this world of the glory of the Creator. He was also the guarantee of social order and the safety of the Jews. This was a more general phenomenon of which the Jewish denominational publicistics was only one manifestation. A readily understandable picture of the role of the ruler placed in the context of the world-view of the Jewish diaspora of Judaism can be found in *Kötelességtan* [Duties] a handbook of religious morals adapted to the bourgeois world, published in Hungarian in 1907 by the Orthodox chief rabbi of Rimaszombat, Leo S. Singer.<sup>14</sup> In the section of the book devoted to the powers that be, chief rabbi Singer drew a picture of the ruler legitimated by God.<sup>15</sup>

## Coronation and the wartime life-worlds

The Neolog Jewish life-world of the coronation was determined by the Great War and the thought of the struggle undertaken together with the nation, as an equal part of it. In Jewish collective memory the equality won with emancipation became a recurring point of reference in judging and interpreting the challenges faced by the community. Emancipation and the ideal of equality shaped Jewish public discourse and became the frame of interpretation for the community response to many challenges.

Incorporating the experience of emancipation into the collective memory and self-definition gave rise to the idea of the joint Hungarian-Jewish conquest among Jews approaching denominational recognition as the country prepared for the Millennium of the conquest. All this displayed the features of Rankean German historicism.<sup>16</sup> The Jewish self-definitions of the Great War were built on the discourses that arose among the political, social and symbolical realities of the previous two or three generations. The wartime publicists writing in *Egyenlőség* spoke of Hungary as the Holy Land, of the Hungarian Jews as brothers of the other Christian members of the Hungarian nation, and of the Jews setting out to war as free, included and fighters for their new homeland. The Jewish middle-aged

<sup>14</sup> SINGER 1907. 210–211, for an analysis, see GLÄSSER 2016.

<sup>15</sup> HAHNER 2006.

<sup>16</sup> See: ZIMA 2008.

generation of the Great War took for granted their equality of civil rights because as the new generation that grew up after recognition they were born into that status and during the war, as members of one of the recognised denominations they were able to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation, the empire and the ruler.<sup>17</sup> Neolog propaganda during the First World War stressed unity with the nation as well as the dynastic grievances and loyalty to the king. Even before the 1916 Jewish census in Germany the Jews had often been accused of being incapable of heroic, self-sacrificing deeds. In Central Europe too the Jews were often accused of evading military service.<sup>18</sup> Refutation of this was part of the Jewish adaptation of war propaganda and also of the later Hungarian-Jewish hero cult.<sup>19</sup>

Parallel with the reception, as part of the church policy struggles, the Catholic People's Party paper, *Alkotmány*, launched by the group led by the conservative aristocrats Nándor Zichy and Miklós Móric Eszterházy, constantly attacked the modern social trends and liberal political aspirations. According to Tibor Klestenitz one of the most important characteristics of the struggle over church policy was the increasingly coarse tone of public life. The Catholic People's Party stood on the basis of the Compromise of 1867, but at the same time the fracture lines in national politics divided the Catholic movement, and on the whole it did not represent either the clergy or the politically active Catholics.<sup>20</sup> The paper's pieces attacking the Jews, liberalism and modernity with its western intellectual roots often led to series of articles in *Egyenlőség* protecting interests and presenting counter arguments. The coronation, that no longer took place as the state religion, merely as a constitutional ceremony conducted by the Catholic church as one of the denominations, became an occasion for attacks in the struggles over church policy. A political debate arose over the appointment to the position of Palatine – which had also been a problem at the time of the coronation of Francis Joseph – due to the fact that the prime minister, Count István Tisza belonged to the Calvinist denomination. The opposition strove to implant in public opinion the idea that the coronation was a strictly Catholic ceremony that would be desecrated by the participation of Tisza as a Protestant.<sup>21</sup> It is in this context that the Neolog Jewish press apologetics on the denominational role of the Jews is to be understood. It was sparked by László Márkus, a publicist for the Catholic People's Party organ, *Alkotmány*, who wrote about the approaching constitutional event as the Jews' coronation.

“Who are crowning? Today it is still they who are the ones crowning. They: that is, the Jews. These are the words of László Márkus writing on Sunday in *Alkotmány*; a person we are glad to recognise as the best

17 *Egyenlőség*, 31 October 1915, 1. Szabolcsi Lajos: “A recepció huszadik évfordulója,” [The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the recognition]

18 PENSLAR 2011. 427–428.

19 GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2015.

20 KLESTENITZ 2013. 40, 45–46.

21 MACZÓ 2016b. 51–52.

director of László Beöthy's theatres. It is only natural that as an excellent director he is not happy with the way the coronation is staged. The Jews have reserved all the places. The new rich and Adolfs is the way Márkus refers to the Jews, of course, they are the ones who are crowning today. They reserved the tribunes, they are watching from the windows, they are sitting on the tower of Matthias Church. Fortunately, there are also a few knights involved, otherwise the coronation would be nothing more than a Jewish long-day procession."<sup>22</sup>

– was the ironical riposte from *Egyenlőség*.

In the articles of *Egyenlőség*, the coronation became a demonstration of belonging to the nation. According to the editorial board:

"Even if the Jews pay out many thousands of crowns, that does not make them guilty or open to attack. All the Jews want is to participate in the national celebration."<sup>23</sup>

Participation and homage also appeared at the individual level. For example, the gifts sent to Vienna to the royal couple by an Orthodox rabbinical student in Pozsony and other Jewish admirers have survived.<sup>24</sup>

The symbolic assertion of equal rights also appeared in news on the preparations for the coronation, questioning why there were no Jews in the list of those to be made Knights of the Golden Spur in Matthias Church.<sup>25</sup>

"If the Golden Spur heroes were not selected but taken to Matthias Church straight from the trenches, a good number of our heroes too would be kneeling before the crowned king. Because the prospective knights have been kneeling for a year and a half now in musty trenches. Jews as well as non-Jews. But precisely because a selection was made, they were left out. No matter, we will keep on fighting."<sup>26</sup>

– wrote *Egyenlőség*.

The unresolved issue of representation in the Upper House – that was a recurring motivation of Neolog efforts for unification<sup>27</sup> – also caused a dent in representation of the equality won and was keenly felt by the Neolog Jewish weekly. At the same time press discourses on the symbolic representation of equal rights also touched on another problem but did not examine it in detail. That problem

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22 *Egyenlőség*, 23 December 1916 /2. Glosszák a hétről; Glosses of the week: The "long-day" procession is an ironic reference to the Day of Atonement that does not include a rite similar to the Christian processions

23 *Egyenlőség*, 23 December 1916 /2. Glosszák a hétről. [Glosses of the week].

24 Maczó 2016a. 379.

25 Maczó 2016b. 104–105.

26 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /7. Glosszák a hétről. [Glosses of the week].

27 See: Frojimovics 2008. 86–90, 264–269.



was secularisation in the sociology of religion sense, that is, discrepancies could be observed between religious norms and the norms and expectations of other institutions of the society. It is an indication of the modern separation of religion from other social forms in the bourgeois life-world of Budapest Neolog Jews that it was only in the case of rabbis that the publicists pointed out the problem that they would not be able to be present at the coronation because of their synagogue service. The question did not even arise that participation in a Catholic mass could perhaps be of concern from the viewpoint of religious laws.

“There are no priests in the delegations of Hungarian Jews participating in the coronation celebration. It would have been better and more in keeping with the spirit of our denomination if the Hungarian rabbis were to be represented at this historical act, but this is prevented in part by the fact that we have no national priestly dignitary or priestly member of the Upper House who could play a role on this occasion *ex officio*, and in part because the coronation is to be held on a Saturday and on this day the rabbis are needed by our people waiting for devotions and edification, our priests cannot leave their temples on that day. For these reasons the noble vestments of the Hungarian Jewish priest will be absent from the company of the splendid garb of the Catholic clergy and the Protestant leaders.”<sup>28</sup>

The parallel drawn between the role of the rabbi and the priests of other recognised denominations was also intended to express linguistically their belonging among the recognised denominations. The term “Hungarian Jewish priest” was used for the spiritual leader of the Jewish denomination in the process of Hungarianisation. Already in the course of the preparations for the coronation *Egyenlőség* had attempted to place the question of Jewish presence at the coronation ceremony in the service of ending the separation within the denomination, that is, for unification.

“When in a few days’ time King Charles IV takes an oath to uphold the Hungarian constitution and laws, he is also vowing to uphold two basic laws for the life of Hungarian Jews, he guarantees the eternal principles of emancipation, the recognition and commits himself to defending our particular freedoms within Hungarian freedom. And the Hungarian Jewish denomination, to which those two glorious laws gave life and rights in this country, will soon have the opportunity to express its great loyalty before the throne. [...] May King Charles IV not get to know the divided Hungarian Israel. May the new Hungarian king see the Hungarian Jews united after the errors of the past. Let the brothers join hands before the throne. Let us

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28 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /15. Hírek – Pap nélkül. [News – Without a priest].



take the great occasion to heart. Let us look to the future and forget the past. Many old dividing walls have fallen during the war. And now, reunited, let us begin a new era in the history of Hungarian Jewry. Let us go before the king together!"<sup>29</sup>

However, the symbolic Neolog involvement of royal prestige into the issue brought no substantive change. The main argument behind the rejection of unification by Orthodoxy was that the respect of religious norms in all areas of life no longer counted as the principal condition for belonging to the Neolog community. The Orthodoxy attributed this to the ideals of the Jewish Enlightenment that imbued Neology. According to *Egyenlőség*, the official Jewish representation at the Christian legal ceremony held on the Sabbath was realised at the societal level through national institutions of the denominations/trends, by individuals representing the institutions, with social standing and through their civic successes, not by rabbis.<sup>30</sup>

## Discourse traditions in the press readings of the coronation

The religious interpretations of the crowned ruler arose from the Diaspora interpretation of Judaism and Judaization of veneration of the ruler in Antiquity. These fitted well into the state patriotic veneration of the king in the time of the Dual Monarchy. Europe's modernising society added nuances to the phenomenon. On occasion feudal traditions intertwined or clashed with the modern ideals of nation. The prayer said for the ruler was an important expression of the relationship between Jewry and the authorities. Variants of the prayer beginning *Hanoten teshuah* [= He who gives salvation] that appeared in Central Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> century showed the relationship between the community and the wider socio-cultural system.<sup>31</sup> The name taken from the first line designates a prayer type that, in Hungarian translation and also in its occurrences in Hebrew, could have numerous variants. The First World War propaganda postcards also carried *Hanoten teshuah* prayer variants, such as the Art Nouveau prayer and greetings card published by the Henrik Spatz Printing House in Budapest for the Jewish New Year that is also known to have existed in a coloured version.<sup>32</sup> Other publications were prayer texts said for Francis Joseph and/or Kaiser Wilhelm, with their portraits.<sup>33</sup> These postcards showed the identification of the Jewish middle

29 *Egyenlőség*, 9 December 1916 /1. Együtt a király elé! [Together before the king!].

30 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /15. Hírek – A magyar zsidó felekezet képviselete a koronázáson. [News – Representation of the Jewish denomination at the coronation].

31 DAMOHORSKÁ 2010. 7, 12–13, 17–20; for the period examined, see: GLÄSSER 2016. 79–81.

32 *Hanoten teshuah* prayer for the ruler, First World War propaganda postcard for the Jewish New Year. Hungarian Jewish Archive, inventory no.: Hu HJA K709

33 See items nos: MILEV Hu HJA K361; Hu HJA K393; Hu HJA K262; Hu HJA K709.

strata with the Central European war aims. The Jewish New Year card published in Vác by Lipót Katzburg – with a visual allusion to veneration of the crowned ruler – placed the war propaganda in a transcendent context with quotations from psalms and a bilingual prayer text, a common phenomenon among Christian denominations too.<sup>34</sup>

Within these frames the mourning homilies on Francis Joseph and news of his death in the press combined the traditions of Judaism with the mourning pomp of the aristocracy and First World War propaganda. The obituaries column of *Egyenlőség* is noteworthy as a forum for the countrywide Jewish commitment to patriotism, the Monarchy and Hungary. From after the issue of the paper announcing the ruler's death to before Pesach a special column was devoted to mourning services held for the salvation of Francis Joseph in communities in Budapest and elsewhere in the country. The editors launched the column as a chronicle of the historical mourning of Hungarian Jews, to show the love that the Jews felt for the king. Mourning for the great ruler who "liberated" the Jewish denomination and attention paid to the symbolic gestures of the new ruler were present in parallel in the press. The articles attempted to trace the attitude of the new ruler towards the Jews, from the process of preparation for the coronation right up to his first constitutional actions affecting the Jews. The prototype was the wartime perception of Francis Joseph, and his memory. He became the model and expectation regarding the new ruler. Charles IV was compared to him in emphasising continuity. The declarations made by the emperor on ascending the throne were presented as condemnation of the accusations questioning the participation of Jews in the war.

"Even before the way opened to his historical vocation King Charles IV, together with his exalted way of thinking, showed justice and understanding towards those of Jewish faith; this is proved by the fact that he recognised and appreciated their patriotic sentiments and actions in the difficult times and qualified them as a merit promising a better future."<sup>35</sup>

In addition to their own institutionalisation, Neology and Orthodoxy also attributed to the merit of the ruler the social integration of the Jews, their acquisition of equal civil rights and status as a recognised denomination. In this way Francis Joseph became a deeply religious Catholic ruler who defended the Jews. According to the Joshua comparison made in *Egyenlőség*, the role of ruler inherited by Charles IV predestined him to be the defender of equal rights for the Jews. For this reason its interpretations of the coronation were intertwined with references to the creation of the new Jewish institutional system simultaneously with the creation of the frames of the modern civil state. In his article published following

<sup>34</sup> See: BUSCH 1997. 94–104.

<sup>35</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 2 December 1916 /13. Hírek – IV. Károly király és a zsidók. [News – King Charles IV and the Jews].

the coronation Arnold Kiss, Jewish poet and Neolog chief rabbi of Buda, drew a parallel between the figure of Charles IV and the ceremony itself and biblical times, following the Jewish view of time that sought an essential identity between the events.

"To the sound of cannon, the ringing expressions of popular joy, and the brilliance of waving banners the ancient Hungarian crown descended on the anointed head of the young ruler. Bells rang and the voice of millions intoned the words of the psalm of the harpist king [David]: 'the king rejoices in your strength, you have placed a crown of pure gold on his head.' This day is one of the most important days in the life of our nation, when the Hungarian king vows to uphold the thousand-year-old constitution and the ancient crown in placed on his head."<sup>36</sup>

The interpretation of the coronation and homage in the Neolog *Egyenlőség* reflected not only religious traditions but also the social reality of the age and were addressed to the ruler acting in a social space, endowed with a personality and known from his declarations as heir to the throne.

"Hungarian Israel stands before the throne of Charles IV with sentiments of homage. It is no longer with the obsequious and fearful gaze of serfs filling their eyes with a veil of past tears, but as self-assured citizens confident of their rights and justice that they vow their loyalty. The brightest of all the pearls on the crown: justice shines in our eyes too. His first word to us was the encouraging word of justice: *'the Jewish population always demonstrated its loyalty and devotion to my Homeland and their home. And in the present great time they have contributed to the successes won through the grace of God with their readiness to sacrifice blood and treasure. I assure their co-religionists that in my lands they will enjoy the rights due to all citizens without restriction ... for the Jewish soldiers all behaved very bravely.'*"<sup>37</sup>

In its articles on the coronation and its later interpretations, the figure of Charles IV was associated with his role of ensuring full equality and preserving denominational peace that, according to the paper, arose from the king's world-view and his personal conviction.

"Hail to the king of Hungary, whose first promise was that he will safeguard equal rights. Hail to the king of Hungary, who on the first

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36 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

37 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

day of his reign remembered with gratitude his Jewish soldiers and the self-sacrifice of the Jews. Hungarian Jewry has no greater wish than these two: that they have rights and freedom and recognition for what they have done for the country. May they be given only an opportunity for development and prosperity.”<sup>38</sup>

Even earlier writings on historical themes in *Egyenlőség* had been marked by the romantic view of history of the Hungarian nobility influenced by the German historicism of Ranke. The historian and rabbi Sámuel Kohn adapted to Hungarian Jewish relations the dynastic, tribal evocation of the past that had its roots in Central Europe and Germany. The Hungarian-Jewish collective founding memory was formulated in the spirit of the millenary anniversary of the Magyar settlement in Hungary and strongly reflected the contemporary reality of emancipation and reception. In the process of becoming Hungarian the social demand for the presentation of the shared establishment of the country, shared origin, the arrival together in the new homeland and a thousand years of shared Hungarian-Jewish collective fate also appeared in the loyal Neolog Jewish interpretations of the coronation.

“Just as today when the struggle is to retain what is ours, Jewish warriors fought among the heroes of the Conquest. For a thousand years we have been among those celebrating the great days of Hungarian kings. Our proud band was an ornament in the procession to the coronation of Matthias Corvinus. Later during dark centuries we were silent witnesses of the joy. But it is the free Hungarian Jews with equal rights who are participating in the coronation of Charles IV. And we interpreted the freedom to mean that we can now sacrifice even more than before for our nation. Now, bent under the weight of the war, but with burning Hungarian enthusiasm, we greet the king and queen with Jewish loyalty. We expect many great things from them. Peace. Peace out there, on the borders and in our homes.”<sup>39</sup>

The publicists writing in *Egyenlőség* made a clear distinction between the veneration and homage that was to be given on the basis of religious tradition – that they illustrated by citing the coronation ceremonies of King Matthias and Francis Joseph – and participation in the coronation on the basis of equal civil and denominational rights. They experienced the coronation held at the end of 1916 as part of the nation, and the Neolog rabbis who shaped denominational publicistics regarded it as important. Neolog rabbi Béla Bernstein, a historian belonging to the new generation in the age of reception, who shaped Hungarian Jewish memory of independence, expressed this thought from the angle of the history of the denomination.

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38 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /1. A koronázás ünnepére. [For the celebration of the coronation].

39 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /1. A koronázás ünnepére. [For the celebration of the coronation].

"December 30, 1916 is a double joyful celebration in the history of Hungarian Jewry for in the work of this great day they are taking part for the first time in the traditional coronation pomp of a Hungarian king. True, there have been many coronations in Hungary in which the Jews also took part, but only from a distance, by manifesting their homage as loyal subjects; but the fact of the coronation did not concern them, they were regarded as foreigners because the Jews were not dear sons of the country, not citizens equal to the others in whose name the Hungarian king was crowned, however small and insignificant part of the nation they may have been. [...] This is not the case now on 30 December 1916! Now the Hungarian Jew with equal rights, son of the Jewish religion that has been given equal rights, follows the brilliant coronation of the new Hungarian king with proud joy, because the deputy palatine elected by the representatives of the Hungarian nation will place the crown of Saint Stephen on the head of the young king in the name of all the people of Hungary and we know and see that there are no longer any serfs, no longer any outcasts deprived of their rights and outside the law in this country; all individuals of whatever estate and rank, whatever language and denomination are equal members with full rights of the state of the Hungarian holy crown."<sup>40</sup>

As Buda chief rabbi Arnold Kiss saw it, that crown: "the crown of loyalty and love", that according to the tradition interpreting the scripture of Judaism the pharaoh did not wish to receive from the delegation of Moses and Aaron, will be an ornament on the head of Charles IV before the Everlasting.

"Our Lord! our king! – they reply [to the pharaoh – G.N.] – we did not bring an ordinary crown for you – eye cannot see its brightness, its weight does not press down on your head, this crown came down to us from heaven, God sent it to you through us, and this crown descended from heaven has the magical property that whoever comes into possession of it does not wear it on his head, the crown carries its possessor, it protects him from attacks, shelters him in trouble, saves him in time of trial. Our name is: Moses and Aaron, we are the teachers of freedom and justice, and the crown that we have brought for you is the crown of love and loyalty'."<sup>41</sup>

In the interpretation of the chief rabbi of Buda, the crown that was of divine origin according to oral Teaching appears again as a sign of the unbroken loyalty of the Hungarian Jews to the king.

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40 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /4–5. Bernstein, Béla: A mi koronázásunk. [Our coronation].

41 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

"We can never for a moment become unfaithful to the crown that we are taking to our king, our shining devotion to our king and country has never wavered even in dark times – the flames of its fire still leap high, in the brilliant sunshine of justice and equal rights, because the admonition of our wise king has become an article of faith<sup>42</sup>: 'fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with the rebellious'." <sup>43</sup>

The Neolog chief rabbi of Buda applied the text of Psalm 21 to the crowned ruler.

"We are singing the ancient prayer of the psalm, the hymn of nations, in our temples: O Lord! the king rejoices in your strength, how great is his joy in your help! You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips. You have welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head."<sup>44</sup>

In connection with the coronation, practitioners of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*<sup>45</sup> representing biblical criticism and historicism placed in the service of moderate religious reform of the community also published writings on the Jewish religious bases of the coronation. The remarks made by Neolog rabbis in country towns drew links between the present coronation and parallels of founding memory. Chief rabbi of Kaposvár, Manó Herczog, analysed the coronation chalice in a psalm of King David, folklorist Bernát Heller drew a connection between the coronation mound and Talmudic legends.<sup>46</sup> In this way they placed the Catholic feudal ceremony within the religious frames of Jewish citizens of the modernising state. They sought the ancient Jewish roots of the Catholic elements, and ordered the historical, folkloristic and historical knowledge of the time into rational historical knowledge. Supporting the aspirations of the community, the *Meturgeman* column that published applied science and took its title from the readily understandable interpretation of scriptures, showed the "Jewish origin"<sup>47</sup> of various elements of the coronation ceremony. In further arguments written in response to the reactions to these, the editor-in-chief Lajos Szabolcsi made a clear link to individual statements coming from outside that represented the historicism of the nobility but questioned the need for a Jewish denominational role in the coronation ceremony. In this way for example the waving of a lulav at Sukhot

<sup>42</sup> *Proverbs* 24:21

<sup>43</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

<sup>44</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

<sup>45</sup> See: GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2014. 155–156, 159.

<sup>46</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 / 4–5 Weisz, Miksa: Koronázás a régi Izraelben [Coronation in ancient Israel]; Bernát Heller also wrote in *Ethnographia* in 1909 on the coronation mound. HELLER 1909. 133.

<sup>47</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 9 December 1916 /20–21. A királyi kézmosás. [The royal hand washing].

was regarded as a parallel to the waving of a sword on the coronation mound.<sup>48</sup> And right from the beginning of preparations a whole series of occasional historical articles evoked Jewish participation in earlier Hungarian royal coronations.<sup>49</sup>

The adaptation of the coronation ceremony at religious community level was achieved by including coronation services before the Sabbath morning prayers. Mihály Guttman, a teacher at the Rabbinic Training Institute – continuing the tradition of a prayer said for the ruler – wrote a coronation prayer that the paper published on a full page.<sup>50</sup> *Egyenlőség* covered the national and local Jewish aspects of the coronation, from Hanukkah news items until after Pesach, as well as the new king's symbolic gestures that affected the Jews. These reports included extracts from the rabbis' speeches, and also mentioned the participation of persons of other denominations in official state positions and other socially prestigious posts in synagogue services following coronation day. The Neolog press interpreted the coronation service speeches made in Hungarian in different Orthodox centres as a sign of Hungarianisation, as confirmation of Neolog homiletics and the adoption of the national language, as support for the Neolog strategy and a sign of progress confirmed by the "new times". This trend had already appeared in *Egyenlőség* in connection with the funeral services held for Francis Joseph.<sup>51</sup> The services after the coronation were held with the intention<sup>52</sup> of providing an opportunity to attend for dignitaries of other denominations who had not been able to attend earlier because of their participation in the coronation ceremony.<sup>53</sup> The symbol of "Hungarian Maccabees" participating with the nation in the common struggle and the reports about the coronation service speeches were used as an allegory in the press in declaring the loyalty of the Jewish denomination to the king.

48 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /11–12. Szabolcsi, Lajos: A kardvágás. [The sword waving].

49 *Egyenlőség*, 9 December 1916 /5. Magyar zsidók az 1790-ik évi koronázáson [Hungarian Jews at the coronation in 1790]; *Egyenlőség* 16 December 1916 / 2–3. A magyar zsidók szerepe a koronázások alkalmából [The role of Hungarian Jews on the occasion of coronations]; *Egyenlőség* 23 December 1916 / 19–20. Adalékok a magyar zsidókról és a koronázásról [On Hungarian Jews and the coronation]; *Egyenlőség* 30 December 1916 /2–3. Büchler, Sándor: Koronázás napján. [On the day of the coronation].

50 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /6. Guttman, Mihály: Héber ima a koronázásra. [Hebrew prayer for the coronation].

51 *Egyenlőség*, 16 December 1916 /11. Hírek – Magyar szó az orthodox templomban. [News – Hungarian language in the Orthodox temple].

52 *Egyenlőség*, 16 December 1916 /10. Hírek – A magyar zsidóság a koronázáson. [News – Hungarian Jewry at the coronation].

53 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /15. Hírek – Koronázási istentiszteletek. [News – Religious services for the coronation].



## Conclusions

Parallel discourse traditions intertwined at various points can be distinguished in interpretations of the coronation. The quotation in the title of this study is a striking example of these mergers. The state patriotic veneration of the king that formed part of the symbolic politics of the Dual Monarchy met with religious traditions of Judaism regarding the crowned ruler. In this way the deceased Francis Joseph became an active participant who understood the attainment of equal rights for the Jews, and the 1916 coronation became a celebration of Hungarian-Jewish equality. The Hungarian elite nobility viewed the events amidst the trappings of historicism. At the Compromise that paved the way for the coronation of 1867 too, they did not think in terms of either state or state sovereignty, but of country and king, and of their historic rights on a dynastic basis.<sup>54</sup> The debates on denominational politics that arose over interpretations of the coronation were of news value for the weekly *Egyenlőség* as violations of equal rights. The presentation of the coronation narrative was not unequivocal even within the Neolog Jewish life-world. Differing traditions and frames of interpretation can be found in the formulation of the texts. The Neolog rabbis presented the events of their time through religious tradition and community memory. Charles IV – like the deceased Francis Joseph – acquired the image of biblical kings, that conveyed the hopes the denomination placed in him as subjects, as well as the role that had been played by Francis Joseph. The professional lawyers or writers who wrote the publicistics interpreted the constitutional and symbolic events of the coronation through the liberal political thinking of the Dual Monarchy, modern constitutional theory, and the enlightened universalist and egalitarian ideals of the Haskalah.

Nevertheless the Jewish confessionalization of the coronation, based on religious traditions reinterpreted within the frame of equality of civil rights in the modern state and internalised through rational historical enquiry, was realised through the participation in church and state ceremonies by the central offices representing the network of Neolog and Orthodox religious communities and in the form of coronation services held within community frames. In this way, through constant reference to his symbolic statements made in the direction of the Jews and to earlier coronations, the figure of Charles IV represented a span of historical development in which the Jews acquired civil rights and became part of the nation. In the 1848–1849 homilies of Lipót Löw this historical arc had already become an “eschatology” linked to the figure of the Everlasting intervening in the fate of the Jews manifested again in history, in the symbolic political space of the Dual Monarchy.

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54 For more detail, see GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2013. 38–39.

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Poster for the Budapest Orthodox Jewish coronation service  
(Hungarian Orthodox Jewish Archive and Library)



Reproduction on a postcard of the royal portrait by Jewish artist Árpád Basch, published by the Office for Military Aid